



OBWB appeals to new federal government for help to keep invasive mussels out of Pacific Northwest

By [staff1](#) on [January 20, 2016](#)

The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) is appealing to the new federal government to step up efforts to prevent the spread of invasive mussels to the Okanagan and the Pacific Northwest. Doug Findlater, OBWB chair, sent a letter last week to three federal cabinet ministers warning them that the cost of an invasion by zebra and quagga mussels in the Pacific Northwest would be \$5 billion per year.

The Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER) has recently called for an additional \$20 million from all partners annually to help protect the region from these mussels. The PNWER includes political and legislative representation from B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, the Yukon, Northwest Territories, Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Montana and Washington.

The letter was sent to Ralph Goodale, minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness; Marc Garneau, minister of Transport; and Hunter Tootoo, minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard.

While acknowledging the announcement of the former Conservative government in June 2015 regarding new regulations under the Fisheries Act aimed at stopping invasive species, the OBWB also calls on the federal government to take additional measures.

These are:

- Provide training and resources to agents of the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) to inspect watercraft entering Canada and stop infested boats;
- Establish full-time seasonal inspection stations at major provincial crossings in Banff and Jasper national parks to protect the Columbia and Fraser river systems and their Pacific salmon populations;
- Engage in the PNWER Invasive Species Working Group to implement recommendations for advancing a regional defence against mussels in the region;
- Work with and fund the provinces of Ontario and Manitoba to contain existing mussel infestations in those provinces;
- Work with and provide funding to Saskatchewan, Alberta and B.C. to assist in implementing a coordinated inspection plan for the remaining uninfested areas.

The OBWB said the letter was being sent because there are now new federal ministers in charge of invasive species and because a recent report from the PNWER now estimates the annual cost of a mussel infestation to the region at \$5 billion.

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